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RUEHNE/AMEMBASSY NEW DELHI PRIORITY 0818
RUEHCI/AMCONSUL CALCUTTA PRIORITY 3014
RUEHGV/USMISSION GENEVA PRIORITY 1456
RUEKJCS/SECDEF WASHDC PRIORITY
RUCNDT/USMISSION USUN NEW YORK PRIORITY 2335
RHEFDIA/DIA WASHDC PRIORITY
RHMFISS/CDR USPACOM HONOLULU HI PRIORITY
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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 KATHMANDU 000088

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E.O. 12958: DECL: 01/16/2017
TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PTER](#) [NP](#)
SUBJECT: NEPAL: MAOISTS JOIN INTERIM PARLIAMENT

REF: A. 06 KATHMANDU 3256

- [1](#)B. KATHMANDU 79
- [1](#)C. 06 KATHMANDU 1267
- [1](#)D. KATHMANDU 61

Classified By: Ambassador James F. Moriarty. Reasons 1.4 (b/d).

Summary

[1](#)1. (U) Nepal's Parliament, which had been reinstated after the successful People's Movement of April 2006, promulgated the interim constitution and dissolved itself on January 15. Immediately upon dissolution, the Maoists joined a new, Interim Parliament. In a feel-good session welcoming the Maoists in from the cold, the Interim Parliament ratified the interim constitution late in the evening of January 15. The next session of the Interim Parliament is planned for January [1](#)17.

Debate Predictable and Scripted

[1](#)2. (C) During the day on January 15, the Parliament, which was reinstated after the April 2006 People's Movement, debated the interim constitution the governing Seven-Party Alliance and the Maoists had agreed upon in December (Ref A).

During the debate, Members of Parliament proposed numerous amendments to the interim constitution, most of them calling for a proportional representation system for the planned election to the Constituent Assembly. During an hour and a half recess, the Prime Minister and Maoist Supremo Prachanda received members of Parliament from different parties in the PM's parliament office, convincing them to move forward on promulgation. While neither Prachanda nor Maoist senior leader Baburam Bhattarai are slated to join the Interim Parliament, both were present during the behind-the-scenes negotiations. Home Minister Krishna Prasad Sitaula also played a role in the negotiations, appearing at the office door many times to shuttle Members of Parliament in or out.

Interim Constitution Promulgated

[1](#)3. (SBU) After a full day of debate and an hour and a half of

negotiations, Prime Minister Girija Prasad Koirala gave a speech calling on the Parliament to withdraw all its amendments and move forward on promulgation of the interim constitution. Most were withdrawn, although a few minor parties forced a vote on their amendments, all of which were defeated by large margins. The Parliament unanimously promulgated the interim constitution at 7:45 p.m. on January 15. Following a written recording of the vote (each sitting Member of Parliament signed the interim constitution), Speaker of the House Subash Nemwang dissolved the Parliament at 8:30 p.m. Before dissolving the longest sitting Parliament in Nepal's history, Nemwang gave an impassioned speech about the work done by the reinstated Parliament and about the expectations of the MPs in the days and months ahead.

Interim Parliament Formed

14. (SBU) Immediately after dissolution of the standing Parliament, an Interim Parliament with 329 members was formed. The sitting members of the former Parliament and the former Upper House, except for those who opposed the April 2006 People's Movement, composed 208 of the members, the Maoists appointed 83 members (Ref B), and the parties in the Seven-Party Alliance appointed 38 members to the Interim Parliament (septel). Just before the session began, Prachanda and Bhattarai attempted to enter the chamber floor, but were stopped by security officers who escorted them to the VIP area for observers. The oldest parliamentarian present, Bal Bahadur Rai, an 86-year old MP from the Nepali Congress Party, took the oath of office and secrecy just before 9:30 p.m., and then Rai administered the oath to the

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other 328 members of the Interim Parliament, en masse, at around 9:30 p.m.

Maoist Leader Gives First Speech

15. (SBU) Krishna Bahadur Mahara, leader of the Maoist MPs, gave a speech soon after the swearing-in of the Interim Parliament in which he stated that, in effect, the monarchy had been abolished and Nepal had become a "People's Republic." Mahara went on to declare that "regressive forces" might try to take the country back from this point, but that the political parties would not allow them. While he did not give a clear definition of what constituted a "regressive force," he implied that it meant anyone that opposed Maoist policies. He said, however, that the Maoists were ready to compete with other political forces in a truly democratic process.

Interim Constitution Approved

16. (SBU) After a few other speeches, the Interim Parliament ratified the Interim Constitution at 11:40 p.m. on January 15, bringing it into force as the supreme law of Nepal. Until that moment, the country had been operating under the Constitution of 1990 as modified by the Parliament in May 2006 (Ref C). The Government of Nepal declared January 16 a national holiday in celebration.

Speaker to be Decided January 17

17. (SBU) The Interim Parliament scheduled its next sitting for January 17. The Interim Parliament is expected to choose a Speaker at that time. While Post had heard there was agreement between the Seven-Party Alliance and the Maoists that Subash Nemwang would remain Speaker of the House in the Interim Parliament (Ref D), several Maoist leaders, including Prachanda, have indicated publicly in recent days that they would like to have a Maoist elected Speaker of the House.

The Speaker holds significant power in controlling the Parliament's legislative agenda.

Comment

18. (C) Despite the overwhelming majority of votes in favor of its adoption, the interim constitution contains a number of controversial provisions. Criticism centers around whether the interim constitution adequately addresses concerns of Nepal's populous Terai region on the border with India, and whether it concentrates too much power in the hands of the Prime Minister. The next few days and weeks will show the path the newly formed Interim Parliament, and its new Maoist members in particular, will follow. Post will be watching closely to see whether Maoist behavior in the countryside shows any change in light of their newly gained stature in Kathmandu.

MORIARTY